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ABSTRACT

Sixteen experienced teachers of reading, from a large, northeastern, American university, were asked how, in their elementary classrooms, they would approach the story of Cinderella. This was done in an attempt to find out what conception teachers might have about the way texts could themselves teach children to negotiate meaning, how teachers saw their role in the child's reading process, and finally if their concept of reading could be used to formulate theories about how children's literature and reading were related. Teachers viewed their role in the reading process as a very directive one. They did not seem to have any conception that the text might have built-in ways for developing narrative competence or that allowing children to respond freely to text could build competence in reading. The responses of two particular children, Ross, 8, and Charlotte, 7, to Errol Le Cain's illustrated version of Perrault's "Cinderella" are described in detail and it is concluded that, by observing how children use a text, it is possible to learn how the text itself can teach (and how pictures can also teach text). The results of listening to children read and discuss a story reveal that literature can itself elicit and sustain the child's interaction, and this process can occur in the classroom, provided that children are given a chance to read as authors teach. (Four references are appended.) (MS)

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BEYOND THE ABC: TOWARD A RHETORIC OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND READING

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BEYOND THE ABC: TOWARD A RHETORIC OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND READING

Nina and Vincent Mikkelsen

Speaking of the need for better theories about literature and the child reader, Meek (1982) points out that studies of Victorian children's books have taught us what adults offered children to read, the kinds of texts children were expected to cope with, which children's books were the popular, the ordinary ones (and which were the exceptions); and from such studies, we can also derive theories that include children reading "as authors taught them to" (286). And the question arises, if a century from now, scholars studied our present literature for children, would they too be able to learn as much? Would they learn how authors teach children? Would they see children reading as author's supposedly teach them--or as teachers teach? And is there a significant difference? Must adults teach an author's text to uncover the author's meaning? Or can text, with little or no adult mediation, teach readers how to read the story? If we were to try to construct theories of how children "take in" text, or "take on" an author's view or paradigm of the world (and if we want children to become more sensitive and competent readers, we would hope to find better ways of assisting them), how would we begin? What would we expect to find?

We began our study with teachers and what we considered to be a fairly simple story that adults for centuries had been offering to children. We asked sixteen experienced teachers of reading who were attending a large, northeastern, American university, how, in their elementary classrooms, they would work with the story of Cinderella. We wondered, as we began, what conception teachers

might have about the way texts could themselves teach children to negotiate meaning, how teachers saw their role in the child's reading process, and finally if their concept of reading could lead us to formulate theories about how children's literature and reading were related, if a theory of one could be, in other words, a theory of the other.

How Teachers Teach: The Question of Divergence

What we discovered first was that these teachers viewed their role in the reading process as a very directive one. Reading a story in their classrooms was primarily a means to an end, the attainment of skills; and their role was to teach or reinforce these skills. Children would read Cinderella, for example, to increase their vocabularies and knowledge of sight words, to identify main ideas, to syllabicate compound words like "godmother," to learn to read better orally, to learn about literary elements like point of view, or, in writing about Cinderella, to learn better how to write. When comprehension was mentioned, as it was in several cases, the story was still being used as a means to an end--a tool-to-teach children to comprehend or to demonstrate or test understanding of the selection. Only one teacher said she would read the story to promote reading or listening pleasure and this was placed lower on a list of priorities than building skill in sequencing and developing background in vocabulary.

In addition, there did not seem to be any conception here that text might have built-in ways for developing narrative competence or that allowing children to respond freely to text could build (or reveal) competence in reading (could produce a reading "lesson"). No teacher turned to an actual audience of children before constructing plans to work with the story, not surprising, since this was only a theoretical situation. What was surprising was that in theorizing, teachers did not consider eliciting children's responses a necessary part of their procedure.

Several teachers said they would begin teaching by asking questions to motivate interest in the story (What would you do if you had magic powers? What would you wish for if you had a fairy godmother?). But they designed these questions themselves, just as they also selected words for vocabulary development, based on what they assumed a child would need to know or wish to know, before interaction with text began, rather than on what they might have discovered if they had waited to see what children were curious about as they began exploring text. Teaching seemed to be largely transmissional (from teacher to student) rather than reciprocal, interactional, or receptive (to teacher from student). Only one teacher said she would begin by "probing children's schema for the story, i.e. ask them what Cinderella is about"; but she listed this suggestion under the category of developing a background for teaching the story. Few, if any, seemed to have confidence in any child meeting a text head on and dealing with it (or learning from it) without heavy adult mediation.

One aspect of mediation involved choice of text,and in each case the chosen version appeared to be Perrault(judging by references to a fairy godmother in each case). In one instance a teacher did mention a plan to share a retelling of the Grimm and the Disney versions, alongside the Perrault; but here again the purpose was to foster critical thinking skills of comparison and contrast and awareness of different artistic styles. Only one other teacher mentioned pictures and then only as motivation for the basal reader story in which she expected to find the Cinderella story. Another teacher said that before students read the Cinderella story (from "a book chosen for good story structure"), she would show a flim of Cinderella and "various books of Cinderella" to introduce the lesson, afterwhich she would tell the story (probably the Perrault version, since she said she would dress as a fairy godmother). But what the various books were she did not say. Neither did she say on what basis she would select them (indicating either no preference or no awareness that one version or adaptation was significantly different from, or superior to, another).

An interesting question arises here from the phrase "good story structure," however. Would one particular version of a story (or version of a version) have a better story structure than another for creating narrative competency, we might ask. And "better" in what way? How would one particular version of the story vary from another, in regard to structure (that filter through which the reader or listener sees how the material is organized into episodes)? Which scenes could a reteller or artist choose to highlight, extend, embroider upon? At what different places could text best be broken for new pages or new pictures? What parts of the original story might be opened up, condensed, summarized, omitted, changed, mixed with another version, distorted--or censored? And why? Could different retellings develop character, identify setting, develop the problem, describe the action, portray the resolution or outcome in different ways--and for different reasons because of different individual interpretations of the reteller or illustrator? And would one way affect a child's understanding of the story differently from another? Clarify? Confuse? Distort? Would comparisons of different versions really ascertain, as one teacher suggested, that a child had understood the story? And if so, how? Would we expect each version, each retelling to paint the same picture in the same way? Produce consensus of interpretation? Or reveal variety, therefore producing dissert? How do we define understanding--from a convergent or divergent response?

Wouldn't each illustrator/adaptor/reteller, for example, interpret a story so idiosyncratically that to comprehend stories, we would have to accept divergent rather than convergent responses, especially if we wanted "to help children think and devise reasonable and logical conclusions," as one teacher said was her goal? (For what is a logical and reasonable conclusion for one reader might very well be an illogical and unreasonable one for another.) And wouldn't anything said or asked before a child heard a story (for what we call motivation and purpose setting) automatically begin to shut down divergence, to formulate conclusions about the story before the story had any opportunity to trigger response? For

example, the question one teacher said she would use to motivate and "teach Cinderella as a story of injustice" (Have you ever felt you were treated unfairly?) seems to tell children, before they ever hear the first sentence of the story or see the first picture, that Cinderella was treated unfairly. But should we be teaching the story as a story of injustice? we might ask. Should we teach a story with any advance idea of what it is about? Should we "teach" a story at all, in fact? For the more we teach, the less we allow text to do so.

We might have our own interpretation of a story, what we think the story is about, but if we teach for that interpretation, aren't we likely to be less open to hearing or listening for other interpretations, interpretations as logical and reasonable as our own? A less objectionable possibility might have been one teacher's plan simply to ask students before they heard the story what they knew about Cinderella and to encourage them to compare any differences they could see. This, it seems, would work to alert children to new ideas (and differences in versions), to arouse curiosity in a text they were about to examine, rather than interpret the story for them. For in working with stories, if we close down response, we shut down comprehension and the possibility for expansion of thought. We limit one response at the expense of another; and if we are to elicit better (richer) response, we need to keep response as divergent as possible, for as long as possible (possibly indefinitely) so that we can continue to search for what is more logical and more reasonable.

There is probably no better proof that interpretation must necessarily and inevitably be divergent than the Cinderella story itself, with each version through the years, in whatever culture, always diverging in some way from the one told before. Thus today we have hundreds and hundreds of versions to choose from as texts. And because children's books are nearly always illustrated (and in so many divergent ways), perhaps we need to direct our attention not merely to how texts teach children, but how pictures at times teach text, how rather than

simply constraining or limiting our imagination (showing us what is in text), illustrations might also at times tell us more than is in text, altering text, yet at the same time, giving us deeper insight into the story.

Since it would appear that no story ever stands still for the teller, instead changes (is reinterpreted, refocused, reinvented) with each retelling, each adaptation, each illustrated version, then it would seem that no text would stand still for a reader either. A text would change with each reading, each viewing, and within the reading as images and ideas are explored, as readers explain the story to themselves, tell and retell the story to make sense of the author's world in terms of their own world and their own world in terms of story, a circular process. And we would short circuit, even erase it, if we did not allow children to interact with text to construct meaning in uniquely divergent ways, responding, at the same time, as the scientist works: first looking, then hypothesizing, gathering evidence, testing it, obtaining reinforcement or rejection from another person, then finally accepting or rejecting the hypothesis on the basis of this interaction with text and others. In this way, children would be placed in situations where they thought and devised logical and reasonable conclusions (logical and reasonable to them, after exposure to the logical and reasonable interpretations of others as well as their own).

Consider, for example, two children, Ross, 8.10 and Charlotte, 7.7, examining Errol Le Cain's illustrated version of Perrault's Cinderella, and notice how pictures lead them more deeply into story, how text and picture together teach them to build meaning into the story, to create meaning, to create story out of story. At this point, we might add, Charlotte had been exposed to five illustrated versions of Grimm, three picturebook versions of Perrault, in addition to a mass market Perrault version she had heard many times at home; and she had, five months before, at 7.2, given the Le Cain version a brief, cursory examination of picture and a mixed review, saying she thought several of the pictures were funny but there were a few pictures she didn't like. Both children had examined a

Chinese version of Cinderella and listened to an Italian version, as well as a Norwegian Cinderlad version; and Ross knew the mass market version of Perrault.

Thus the story wasn't a new one to them; what was new was Le Cain's individual treatment of it, the way he illustrated the story to communicate his own interpretation of it and the way the children responded to his interpretation (his adaptation/translation of the French text and his illustrations). And what is especially important for our purposes here is the extensive examination the children gave the illustrations and the way they paused over the cover for a longer period than nearly any other page and certainly longer than they had paused over any other book cover.

How Text Teaches

"That looks neat," Charlotte said, noting the cat and the "big gray pumpkin" on the cover as we sat down to read. Ross noticed the lizard immediately. And what seemed like small, insignificant details--a lizard, mouse, a shadowy pumpkin, had meaning for the way the story developed for the children, enabling them to start telling a story of the familiar story at this point (as Charlotte noted, "That's probably one of the mice that's going to be a coachman") and to tell stories within stories of their own: "There's a little lizard right there," said Ross, "probably what the cat's looking for."

Right here in this cover picture, in fact, is something of a cognitive map of the entire story; everything is in place for the story to begin. ("They've got a lot of things hiding," as Charlotte says.) The players are all arranged on stage as the curtain rises; everyone is here but the Prince, whose invitation to the ball will move the story into action. (Even the lizard and mouse are here, awaiting their moment of transformation.) The motivation for the action is here (the stepfamily in comical, gaudy finery plays as Cinderella in patched dress works). The child's potential for growth is here (magical power indeed). And the potential for reversing injustice is here also in the godmother's magic

wand that hangs suspended over the page as both blessing for Cinderella and doom for her oppressors. Image and detail then work to structure story, lead readers into the story, but slow them down to assimilate beforehand all that will be encompassed within it.

This frame of cover "covers" another page, a wordless, introductory page, that further draws the reader into story, as well as foreshadows a latter scene, the midpoint of story: Cinderella riding to the ball beside a stream where footmen, lizard green in the reflected water and horses, mouse brown, reveal in the juxtaposition of nature below and culture above (what humans transform, change, make out of nature) a double vision of life and the mystery of it. And it is the mystery of the picture (the technical aspect of how the illustrator created the same scene of horse and carriage above and below water) that Ross and Charlotte pause to discuss at this point. ("Because you can't draw the same thing twice," says Ross.)

On the next page, an illustration of Cinderella sitting with her embroidery, image and detail of culture and nature interlock again as clocks over the fireplace are balanced by pumpkin, mice and lizards below, broom straw is replicated in Cinderella's straw hair, and the faces of the cold, oppressive stepfamily stare across at Cinderella's "Mother Nature." And it is on this page that Ross notices the fairy godmother for the first time. ("Wait a minute! I know what that blue thing on the cover is--the fairy godmother! She's always looking down.")

Charlotte confirms his hypothesis: "Look, yes, this is her nose, here's her face, here's her hair, the eyes." And she extends his idea with another theory, which Ross in turn confirms, emphasizing the godmother's role as protector:

N: What's this? (circular object on the cover)
C: That's just her wand or it's just symbols of the story for the person who made the story, but I think it's her wand.
R: Yes, she looks down on Cinderella all the time.

Charlotte decides to read this page herself, and as Ross tells her the word "gentleness," a self propelled study of vocabulary arises easily and naturally within the context of story, rather than isolated from it. I pronounce the

word "haughty." Charlotte adds that the daughters take after their mother; they are haughty too. Then Charlotte tells us herself what "gentleman" means: "He's proper; he's not any person who would wear a black, shiny vest and jeans to work." Ross adds, "He wouldn't put his shoes up on the table."

Charlotte's next comment that he'd wear a straight jacket causes Ross to make a play on words(to define "s'raight jacket" as "strait jacket"; "your hands tied behind your back," he says) and Charlotte to clarify her own term, in terms of the original word "gentleman," as a "regular jacket a gentleman would wear to a party if he were going out to dinner," and Ross to extend further his own definition: "They sew the sleeves together like this," he gestures, "in a strait jacket."

Ross's word "strait jacket" reverberates effectively a few pages later when two scenes, each devoted to Cinderella's helping her sisters dress for the ball are played each against the other for a comic effect. Ross and Charlotte find humor in the opposing form that lend a new dimension to the characters, separate them, individualize them, finally dwarf them in their comic excesses:

C: Look at her! She's putting too much powder on.
R: yeah. She's putting the powder straight onto her mouth.
C: She's the lazy one.
R: Look how much powder she's putting on. She's got this gigantic brush.
C: Look at her. She's the fat one. This is the lazy one. There's the fat one. She's [Cinderella's] trying to pull the sash so she's skinny! She is skinny! Look at the mice and the candy. The candy is here. That's why she's so fat!
R: They have a whole page about one certain person.
C: It's so funny because look at how she's trying to pull it.
R: Wide-eyes! She's trying to pull it so tight, she looks skinny. But she's really fat trying to be skinny!

And it is the way Cinderella's arm pulling the white sash of the tight bodice against the black background in this second black and white picture that produces the comic effect, in its emphasis and surprise, that surely would be lost in color. (As Charlotte says, "You see her hand. This [the wall] would probably be white.")

Charlotte's point is a good one. In fact it might lead us to see just why Le Cain chose to intersperce black and white illustrations with color ones throughout the story, perhaps an economic measure, as Ross asserts, but also,

or if so, an effective measure to break the story for emphasis, surprise, and commentary on the characters and their actions. In the first black and white picture, an enlarged detail of the cover picture, Cinderella in a stark white apron, sweeps up the leaves on a white patch of ground, as the text describes how hard she works in her old clothes--but how beautiful she remains. In juxtaposing a clean, white apron and a clean patch of earth, we see, in concrete form, such abstract ideas as diligence, strength, cleanliness, virtue (all fused as beauty: inner beauty, as the foundation or support structure of the outer form).

In the third black and white picture, Cinderella's apron becomes a handkerchief emphasizing her oppressed, lowly condition (telling,as she weeps, why she weeps). And it also serves well to keep a powerless child protagonist empowered, not overwhelmed or overshadowed by the massive magic power of the fairy godmother that enfolds her. The godmother's brilliance is diluted here by the absence of color, allowing Cinderella, who on this page of text is placed in the apprenticeship role--to help the godmother who is helping her.

The lizards, mice, and pumpkin of the cover also emerge more clearly here, their role soon to begin in earnest. "Look at the lizards," says Ross, who has been following the lizards like a magic thread through every picture. "I think they'll be the coachmen," answers Charlotte. "I'm getting an idea of something," says Ross, as we turn the page, the picture of the transformation of mice to horses and the lizards to coachmen. The children discover "a touch of mouse," as the feet and tails that get bigger and bigger. "Mice have a special piece of skin and another bone right there and it helps them walk," Ross says. Lizards' feet become high heels of the footmen, they notice, to their surprise (a high point of humor for them at this point);and thus another pattern appears to fuse on the page (and in the reader's mind) with the notion of change, evolution, and transformation. "The coat of the lizard and the feet," as Charlotte says, "are the feet, the arms, and the face."

The godmother does appear in color on this page, her wand inseparable from the stars that are noticed by Charlotte; and Cinderella is absent from the picture now but her role in the story is not dimished because she is emerging more and more now as the godmother's partner (an initiator of action now, not simply one following orders), indicating her growing power to meet whatever task is given her. (The godmother can't think what to do about a coachman; Cinderella has a good idea.)

The next picture is a half repeat, in black and white, of the introductory picture of Cinderella riding to the ball. Charlotte says she prefers the picture in color. There Cinderella is prettier, she says, doesn't have white hair or gray hair, a comment which might very well lead us to see that again Le Cain has used the white of black and white picture to signal meaning. Here the three pictures of the carriage taken together (one in color, another a faded, deeper color of the water reflection, and the third a colorless, deeper "color" of darkness, or color replaced by darkness and moonlight, shows us within magic time, the reality of time: time passing, magic fading as each moment from the first moment of the magic time began (a symbol of life itself passing). For this picture accompanies that part of the text which gives the godmother's warning that Cinderella should leave the ball before midnight.

In the next picture, a gaudy, grandiose spectacle of Cinderella and the Prince meeting at the ball, Charlotte notices Cinderella's high flying hat and laughs because the Prince has "knickers a foot long long eachof them!" Ross points out the godmother's wand which Charlotte sees alternately as a clock (eight o clock). Ross accepts her reasoning, but says it is seven.

The next page, black and white again, emphasizes the clock face. And whereas the mice and lizards carried the narrative thread for the first half of the story, the clock is what the children now notice. "She's got two hours," Ross announces for this picture. They also decide the sisters want to steal something from Cinderella. "Her JEWELS!" they cry out together, when I ask what.

"See how they're kind of smiling up at her? Showing their teeth?" Charlotte remarks. (Again the black and white contrast emphasizes gesture and facial expression.)

The page following this one, Cinderella running from the ball, her fine dress reverting to rags (a picture rising not out of text, since the text simply says Cinderella arrived home in her old clothes, one slipper lost, but out of Le Cain's expansion of text) produced the richest response for the children. Notice how as Ross listens to text and examines the picture of Cinderella losing one shoe, as her gown fades slowly away--but not the other, he begins hypothesizing about Perrault's most intriguing blank space of story: the glass shoe, the one remnant of the magic that remains mysteriously intact after the stroke of midnight.

R: Oh yes, she gave them to her. She didn't turn anything into them, so the slippers weren't magic. The fairy godmother gave them to her. She didn't tap anything with her wand. The slippers didn't disappear because she gave them to her. She didn't turn anything into the slippers. That's why the slippers didn't disappear at the stroke of midnight.
C: He's right!
R: Oh and look, here, here, and here, here, and here. Slowly changing back.
C: How right here, she's a regular princess.
R: And it slowly changes, it slightly changes.
N: Like with the mice and the horses, yes, and now it's going back in the other direction, isn't it?
C: Look how she turns. She's a regular princess. She turns purple. She turns grey. She turns pink, then she turns regular.
R: Yes, it's just showing you she just changes a little every minute. Every little bit, she changes a little, every time. Every one is changing, just a little bit.

Ross's hypothesis is logical and reasonable--and <u>important</u> because it enables us to see the story as more logical, causes us to see better why Cinderella's goodness never fades, when in spite of all her stepfamily has done to hurt her, she never retaliates (something freely given, her good will, as with the shoes, can never be taken back). The other magical elements (carriage, footmen, coachman, gown) she earned through helping or she requested them. But the shoes were simply the godmother's gift to her. And her goodness is her gift to others.

In this same rich picture of dress changing and shoe remaining is also the everpresent circular symbol. "Wait a minute," Ross says. "Now I know what that is; it's the clock." "It's similar," Charlotte agrees, "but look, this has--it's wierd." Whereas on the previous pages, Ross saw a wand (which Charlotte saw as a clock), then they both saw the clock (but not as a wand), now as they both examine two pages filled with these circular symbols, they begin to see more:

R: Clocks!
N: and--
R: Wands! And they've all got a different time. They all seem to have a different time . . .It's turning out very simple but not very simple at all. It's turning out like the one [the book] Charlotte brought from home, but now it's gotten so complicated.

A story filled with complex notions is slowly coming to light for Ross and Charlotte--time and change, growth and power, time running on magic, magic (power) running out in time. And the question arises, would children have been discovering story (discovering the complexity of story--and managing to deal with the complexity) had Le Cain not marshalled his textual forces so well to teach his audience? What then can we make of how his text teaches? How does structure carry meaning, or to return to the teacher's concern for "good story structure," what makes LeCain's story structure "good"?

Toward a Rhetoric of Children's Literature and Reading

It would appear that he has produced two major scenes in which complexities of growth, change, time, and power are illuminated: the scene of mice to horses (low to high estate, small to great size, forward movement to the goal) and the scene of splendor to rags (high estate to low, backward from the goal and to the final solution of the problem: she must obey must go back in order to go forward to succeed, must run the race backward to win it). And the scenes are illuminated because Le Cain is balancing two structural principles to carry the deep structural "meaning" of the story.

First he utilizes effectively, in both text and picture, what Iser (1987) describes as a "blank space of story," that "hidden side of a perceived object [which] cannot always be completed out of our store of knowledge--but remains an indeterminate background which transforms what is perceived into a tension, if not an actual sign" (178) that "stimulates" (rather than demands completion from) "our existing store of knowledge" (177). Ross and Charlotte ponder long over the blank spaces of both picture and text in these two scenes: How does a mouse turn into a horse? A dress into rags? How does magic work? What is change, evolution, growth? (Ross says, "I'm getting an idea of something"--and he is; the pictures show us time compressed by magic.)

Second Le Cain utilizes dualistic patterns in both scenes to project time and change in the images of shoe and foot and clock and wand. Speaking of the binary oppositions that can be used to order themost heterogeneous elements so pervasive in literature, Jonathan Culler (1975) has explained that "when two things are set in opposition to one another the reader is forced to explore qualitative similarities and differences, to make a connection so as to derive meaning from the disjunction (15). Just as clocks and wands have been linked many times in the story as stars (signifying the power and magic of time to constrict or liberate, to control or free us from control, and the pattern of time, imposed cultural time of clocks and nature's time of stars, linked in the human desire to confine and control time), finally shoe and foot are linked to clock and wand in the shoe test scene, as Ross notes at this point: "There's a glow around the slipper!" There is meaning in the pattern of star time, magical because inexplicable, balanced in the way humans try to arrange the pattern, to alter star time, to adjust fate.

There are other scenes in the story also, minor, comical scenes of people trying to change themselves to be something they arenot or do not deserve to be (or do deserve to be, but are prevented being by man-made, cultural "rule" or the "facts" of reality--the fat sister being laced, strait-jacketed, or

corseted, both sisters with fat feet or long feet gasping when the shoe fits Cinderella). Even Cinderella and the Prince are comical in their ornate, exaggerated apparel--tall hat, hugh knickers--revealing that humans go proportionately all wrong at times, comically, artifically, "culturally" wrong, in their struggle to transform themselves.

Conversely the Prince and Cinderella are seen as colorless, small, insignificant in the next to the last picture, when the godmother transforms Cinderella once more to high estate. (As grandeur was produced magically, magic now must be diluted, placed in proportion to reality.) And in the final picture, everything is in color, but color and design are balanced once more between nature and civilization, real and magical, human power and superhuman magic. Cinderella is changed from the early pictures of rags, but she is no longer comical in her riches. The dress flows out in balanced lines. Gaudy and artificial are removed; stepfamily is out of the picture--but not destroyed. (Evil cannot be destroyed; has to be assimilated, regulated as humans regulate time or attempt to do so, in responsible action.) Everything is set right now that had been worked into the life pattern wrong. The mice are back in place--as mice. The wand is back in the sky as a star. Cinderella and the Prince begin a new reign of power, their lives, their stature balanced.

Abstract concepts of time and growth, self indulgence and self control, magic power and human responsibility then are given concrete form by Le Cain's treatment, his arrangement of them in three principle ways that trigger response. First cognitive mapping of story in the early pictures (cover, title page, first page of text) act as a structuring device, a way to focus the reader on character, motivation, and conflict in the story, as well as to provide a launching pad for the reader's hypothesizing. Second, blank space, ambiguity, and subtleties in both picture and text produce a tension, a possibility of alternative readings, doubleness of vision. The book elicits hypothesis, deduction, inference (mental involvement) rather than interpretative closure. Third, binary patterns expressing

the interrelationships of adult and child, as adult protector (and adult oppressor) and child victim, are balanced with the child's growth into protector rather than oppressor (Cinderella's benevolent treatment of her stepsisters), thus inviting the child's sympathy for and identity with an empowered child protagonist learning to cope and survive in the world, at the same time these patterns assist the child to construct meaning for the story.

And what we need, if we are to develop better theories of how literature and reading are connected (and if we are to convince teachers that text can teach--and pictures can teach text) are more studies of children responding to literature, for the best evidence that literature can itself teach narrative competence is found in the actual responses of children as they interact with stories. If teachers could see text admitting children to the author's world, if they could see evidence of text eliciting and sustaining the child's interaction with a book, then perhaps they would believe the same process could occur in their own classrooms. They might begin to move then beyond present practices that lead to convergent thinking and emphasis on isolated skills and allow children more often to read--as authors teach.

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